
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 443 (File 240, as amended by Senate "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING PESTICIDES ON SCHOOL GROUNDS, PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, ATHLETIC FIELDS AND MUNICIPAL GREENS AND BANNING THE SALE AND USE OF GENETICALLY-ENGINEERED LAWN OR TURF SEEDS.

SUMMARY:

This bill bans selling, offering for sale, distributing, marketing, using, or planting lawn or turf seed that is at least partially genetically engineered to make the seed pesticide resistant.

The bill's ban applies to a seed, seed mixture or combination, or plant grown from the seed that is (1) commonly sold, marketed, or known as a grass seed and (2) intended for residential or commercial use. It includes such seeds as:

1. cool season Kentucky bluegrass;
2. chewings, hard, red, or tall fescue;
3. annual, intermediate, or perennial ryegrass; and
4. colonial or creeping bentgrass.

The bill allows the agriculture commissioner to adopt regulations to implement and enforce the bill's provisions.

Existing law requires certain genetically engineered seed and seed stock to be labeled as such (see BACKGROUND).

*Senate Amendment "A" removes (1) provisions on pesticide application on school and municipal parks, athletic fields, greens, and playgrounds and (2) penalties for violating the seed ban.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

GENETIC ENGINEERING

The bill's ban applies to lawn or turf seed that is at least partially genetically engineered to make the seed pesticide resistant. Under the bill, lawn or turf seed is "genetically engineered" if it was produced from an organism or organisms in which the genetic material has been changed by:

1. in vitro nucleic acid techniques (see below), including recombinant DNA techniques and direct injections of nucleic acid into cells or organelles (parts of cells) or
2. fusing cells, including protoplast fusion, or hybridization techniques that overcome natural physiological, reproductive, or recombination barriers, where the donor cells or protoplasts do not fall within the same taxonomic group, in a way that does not occur by natural multiplication or natural recombination.

The bill defines "in vitro nucleic acid techniques" as techniques, including recombinant DNA techniques, that use vector systems and techniques involving the direct introduction into organisms of hereditary materials (e.g., genes) prepared outside the organisms, such as micro- or macro-injection, chemo- or electro-poration, microencapsulation, and liposome fusion.

PESTICIDE

Lawn or turf seed falls under the bill's ban if it was genetically engineered to resist pesticide. A pesticide, under the bill, is a fungicide used on plants, an insecticide, a herbicide, or a rodenticide, but not a sanitizer, disinfectant, antimicrobial agent, or a pesticide bait in a tamper-proof container.

BACKGROUND

Labeling of Genetically Engineered Seed and Seed Stock

By law, seed and seed stock that is at least partially genetically engineered and intended to produce certain foods for human consumption must be labeled as "Produced with Genetic Engineering." But this requirement does not take effect until a certain

date after four other northeast states, including one bordering Connecticut, have enacted a similar labeling law and the total population of these states exceeds 20 million (CGS § 21a-92c).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 17 Nay 11 (03/21/2014)